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SUBJECT: G8 AMBASSADORS BRIEF U.N. AND ECOWAS ON POLITICAL OUTLOOK IN GUINEA

REF: A. CONAKRY 318

B. CONAKRY 333

Classified By: ECONOFF T. SCOTT BROWN FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. The G8 ambassadors painted a bleak picture of the Guinea's political outlook for the U.N. Office for West Africa (UNOWA) and ECOWAS on Monday, July 7. The Ambassadors recommended that ECOWAS set several benchmarks to track the government's progress towards elections, and that ECOWAS has a role to play in regional border security. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) The G8 Group, consisting of Ambassador Carter; the Ambassadors of Britain, France, Germany, Spain; the European Union delegate; and the UN Coordinator met with U.N. Special Representative for West Africa (UNOWA), Said Djinnit, and the ECOWAS Executive Secretary Mohamed Ibn Chambas on July 7 to discuss Guinea's current political outlook. Djinnit and Ibn Chambas said they were soliciting the views and advice of the G8 ahead of meetings with GOG on Tuesday. Econoff accompanied the Ambassador as notetaker.

¶3. (C) During the frank and open discussion, the G8 ambassadors conveyed many of the same conclusions they discussed following the meeting with Finance Minister Dore on June 23 (reftel). They touched on the weakness of Guinea's government and institutions, military insubordination, splintering of civil society, increase in drug and human trafficking, and the poor prospects for elections in late 2008.

¶4. (C) The French Ambassador opined that the recent violence between the police and the military showed people what civil war in Guinea might look like, and reminded them of the recent conflicts in Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia. He said that President Conte would certainly remain in power if the people are reluctant to take to the streets out of fear of prolonged violence and bloodshed.

¶5. (C) The German Ambassador said that he viewed the current government as a "government of predators" who seek only personal gain at the expense of Guinea. He said that he believes the government is not serious about holding elections at all, as they have not mentioned elections in any major political statements since taking office. He also noted that before, Guineans believed that a "positive coup" such as what occurred in Mali in 1991 and Mauritania in 2001 could help Guinea out of its current governance crisis. However, it is clear that after the mutiny that no one has faith in this approach.

¶6. (C) The ambassadors said that elections were essential in improving Guinea's future, and encouraged the U.N. and ECOWAS to hold the government to concrete benchmarks. On the subject of national reconciliation, they said that a neutral party should guide the discussion, noting that the Christian Council of Guinea was perhaps the only group able to do this in the country (reftel).

¶7. (C) Turning to the question of border security, the ambassadors noted that ECOWAS should also improve the border control capacity of Guinea's neighbors. Chambas stated that the Mano River Union leaders, particularly the presidents of

Sierra Leone and Liberia, were concerned about the impact a prolonged crisis would have on the region. Chambas agreed with Ambassador Carter that the Union is not equipped to manage its borders and that there may be a role for ECOWAS in this context.

¶8. (SBU) The next day, Djinnit and Chambas met separately with Prime Minister Souare, Foreign Minister Bah, union leaders, and representatives of political parties. They emphasized the need for regional security and stability, restructuring the military and security forces, and a national dialogue on reconciliation.

¶9. (C) COMMENT. During the meeting, it appeared that Djinnit and Chambas took what the G8 ambassadors said to heart. However, the short duration of their trip, along with the fact that they did not meet with either the Minister of Defense or the Minister of Security, raises the question of how effective the mission really was. END COMMENT.

CARTER